



**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**  
*Staff Report*

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REPORT NO: CAO-2024-02  
TO: Council  
SUBMITTED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO  
PREPARED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO  
REVIEWED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO  
DATE: February 15, 2024  
SUBJECT: Township of Wilmot Corporate Strategic Plan – Options

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council receive Report CAO 2024-02 regarding a Request for Proposals for a Strategic Plan for information purposes, and further  
THAT staff be directed to negotiate with the successful bidder to identify components of the strategic plan that could be completed with internal resources.

**SUMMARY:**

In the 2023 budget, Council approved the issuance of a Request for Proposal for a third-party consultant to coordinate the Strategic Planning process and public engagement for the Township of Wilmot's 2024 to 2027 Strategic Plan. The RFP closed on December 1, 2023, with 13 submissions. Following the receipt of submissions, staff was prepared to award the RFP to the successful vendor, as is authorized under the Purchasing By-law, and to begin work on the Strategic Plan.

At the January 25, 2024, Finance and Budget Committee meeting, Council approved a motion instructing staff to bring forward a report with options that include the possibility of bringing the

Strategic Plan in-house to reduce cost and the possibility of deferring the Strategic Plan to the 2025 Budget.

This report presents four options for Council's consideration. The options are:

1. Award the RFP as submitted by the successful bidder.
2. Award the RFP to the successful bidder, discussing an amended scope following the reward.
3. Reject all bids and deferring the Strategic Plan to 2025
4. Reject all bids and completing the Strategic Plan using internal resources.

### BACKGROUND:

The Township of Wilmot sought the services of a strategic planning and engagement expert and facilitator to work with the Wilmot Corporate Leadership Team, Township Council and internal and external stakeholders to develop the Township's Strategic Plan for 2024 to 2027.

This four-year plan is a vision for the future—one that strikes a balance between available resources and big dreams. This Strategic Plan will provide an opportunity to shape programs, services and Township planning into the future.

The services included in this Request for Proposal require an experienced strategic planner, community engagement expert and facilitator. The successful Proponent will work with Council, the CAO, the Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives and the Corporate Leadership Team.

At the January 25, 2024, Finance and Budget Committee meeting, Council approved a motion that instructed staff to bring forward a report with options that include the possibility of bringing the Strategic Plan in-house to reduce the cost, or the possibility of deferring the Strategic Plan to the 2025 Budget.

Bidders are required to maintain their price quotes and bid details for 60 days following the bid closing. Given the direction from Council to present alternatives to issuing the RFP and proceeding with the Strategic Plan work, the Township asked the top three bidders to extend honouring their prices to February 16, 2024.

### REPORT:

Following the January 25, 2024, Budget and Finance Committee meeting, staff obtained a legal opinion regarding the cancellation of the RFP, which will be presented to Council in a closed meeting. As the deadline for award of the RFP was December 1, 2023, bidders were asked if they would hold their prices until February 16, 2024, to allow time for Council to review and discuss the RFP process.

The top three bidders have agreed to hold their bids.

Below is a summary of the Options available to Council. Options #3 and #4 provide the information requested by Council regarding potential deferral of the project until 2025 and completing the work using in-house resources.

Details regarding the four options are:

- **Option #1: Award the RFP as submitted by the successful bidder.**

The Township's purchasing and procurement policy allows the immediate award of the RFP. The timelines outlined in the RFP submissions will now be altered, with a completion time of approximately six months after the award of the RFP.

All bids contained detailed schedules for a compressed RFP process. Other municipalities in the Region have indicated that it takes 18 months to complete a full Strategic Plan process.

The advantages of using a consultant to lead the Strategic Plan process include that fewer internal resources are required. The successful Proponent will work with Council, the CAO, the Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives and the Corporate Leadership Team.

Council would play a lead role in providing input throughout the process. Council would receive regular updates from the internal project team and the consultant, would participate in focus groups and public sessions, have input into final report, and provide final approval of the completed Strategic Plan.

A disadvantage to this option may be that some consultants take a similar approach to strategic planning with each municipality they work with. The Wilmot team would work with the consultant to ensure that the plan is tailored to reflect the uniqueness of the Township.

- **Option #2: Award the RFP to the successful bidder, discussing an amended scope following the award.**

A second option to consider is awarding the RFP with an amended scope of work. This would include enhancing the community/stakeholder engagement activities while moving some activities in-house. This would be done after the RFP is awarded, when the Township could work with the consultant to alter the scope. The internal team would take a greater role in updating Council and reporting back and while also being involved in the community/stakeholder engagement activities.

- **Option #3: Reject all bids and defer the Strategic Plan to 2025**

The current RFP has indicated a timeline of less than a year, which is a partial process compared with the 18 months estimated for a complete Strategic Plan development. For this

reason, implementing a Strategic Plan process in 2025 may allow Council to develop a plan but will limit Council's opportunity for implementation during this term of Council.

Searching for an appropriate bidder following a cancellation in 2024 may present challenges for Wilmot, and not having a Strategic Plan may create limited prioritization of projects and goals and reduced future vision. Resources can also be spread too thin.

A Strategic Plan with specific deliverables and timelines, followed by the development of business plans, allows the Township and Council to create and track KPIs to determine the progress of Council's goals and objectives.

The Township's current Strategic Plan, updated in 2020, represents the vision of the previous Council, administration and senior leadership. There are many action items in this plan with room for many more strategic objectives to be developed for a future-facing Wilmot.

"During the 2023 Township Budget, Council approved the inclusion of funds in the budget with the understanding that a formal RFP would be released to secure a third-party contractor to coordinate the Strategic Planning process and public engagement. If Council chooses to direct staff to proceed with Options #3 a vote of reconsideration would be required before proceeding with consideration of such options."

- **Option #4 – Reject all bids: Complete the Strategic Plan with internal resources**

The concept of developing an in-house Strategic Plan is one preferred by some larger municipalities with a great number of staff. They indicate that they have a dedicated in-house project lead and the support of a significant number of staff to manage and complete the work. Those who have opted for the in-house process also indicate that they prefer to use an outside expert for the stakeholder/community engagement piece and sometimes also for the best-practice research portion of the work. Smaller municipalities who take on the strategic planning process with in-house resources are typically doing a "refresh" of the existing strategic plan, rather than starting from scratch.

The Township's existing strategic plan was developed under the previous Council and Administration. Due to the full turnover on Council and change in Senior Leadership, and also in anticipation of significant community growth, it may be more appropriate to develop a new strategic plan, rather than a refresh of the existing strategy.

The Township requires additional internal resources to lead and support the Strategic Plan exclusively in-house. The services included in this Request for Proposal are:

- The development and completion of a Strategic Plan based on internal and external engagement with stakeholders and based on a foundation of best-practice research.
- A detailed timeline that includes engagement opportunities with internal and external stakeholders and the role of the Proponent working with Township leadership and presentations/checkpoints with Township Council.

- A draft Strategic Plan document that will be presented to Township of Wilmot Council for consideration and approval.
- The development of an online dashboard framework to assist the Township in tracking its Strategic Plan implementation while sharing those updates in real time with the community.
- In-person attendance at meetings with the Township's Corporate Leadership Team and presentations to Wilmot Township Council when reaching milestones in the Strategic Plan process.

Understanding that effective in-house Strategic Plan development requires a dedicated in-house team working several months to support this project, staff is recommending that additional support from a consultant is required due to the significant number of corporate-wide projects already underway, and the requirement to respond to legislative changes that will arise from Bill 23 and regional governance review.

Council, the CAO's Office and the Corporate Leadership team will play a key role in engaging the community and development of the Strategic Plan. This will allow the Township to be effective in its day-to-day activities and have capacity for the current and future projects required by Council.

As with Option #3, if Council chooses to direct staff to proceed with Options #4 a vote of reconsideration would be required before proceeding with consideration of such options.

#### ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

The 2020 Update to the Township's Strategic Plan was developed through engagement with residents, community organizations, businesses, and Council, with staff distilling the feedback down to identify six (6) Core Values that Wilmot embraces:

- Health and wellbeing
- Community
- Legacy
- Accessibility and Inclusivity
- Forward-thinking, and
- Balance

The Strategic direction of the Township is predicated on five (5) main goals:

- Community Engagement
- Economic Prosperity
- Environmental Protection
- Quality of Life, and
- Responsible Governance

The new Strategic Plan builds on the strengths of the existing Strategic Plan to drive the organization toward Wilmot's vision, mission and goals.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A capital allocation of \$50,000 is assigned to this project through the General Levy Fund.

ATTACHMENTS:

None.